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High Commissioner's Programme**

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Chairperson: Ms. Amanda Gorely (Australia)

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Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

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The meeting was called to order at 10.02 a.m.

3. International protection

(a) Note on international protection (EC/75/SC/CRP.13) [resumed]

1. The representative of **Germany** said that the intensification of armed conflicts, including in the Gaza Strip, Haiti, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, highlighted not only the centrality of protection but also the importance of a rules-based international order under which the principles of international law were adhered to. The protection of refugees and asylum-seekers, humanitarian professionals, civilians and civilian infrastructure must be at the heart of the international community's collective engagement. As funding projections for 2025 were reduced and the humanitarian funding gap ongoing, much more must be done to increase efficiency and effectiveness in responses to displacement. Partnerships along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus must be reinvigorated and clear focus must be maintained on the Office's core mandate: protection and emergency relief. It was important to give sufficient attention to less well-resourced areas of protection, such as mine action and housing, land and property. His country had recently presented a new mine action strategy, which recognized the enabling role of mine action in all aspects of protection and humanitarian responses.

2. Finding solutions to gender-based violence and strengthening child protection in asylum procedures was critical. Having spearheaded a pledge on strengthening national system capacities and legal frameworks to respond to gender-based violence, his country encouraged more host States to match that pledge. Ensuring asylum systems worked fairly, effectively and efficiently, including those along mixed migration routes, was key. In that connection, he commended Colombia, Ethiopia and the World Bank for the development of new tools aimed at reducing bureaucracy and empowering asylum-seekers through improved access to information. He also commended UNHCR on updating refworld, which was an important source of country-of-origin information and an essential tool for UNHCR to mitigate the effects of the rise in fake news. It was essential to combat misinformation, disinformation and hate speech.

3. The representative of **Brazil**, noting with concern the record number of forcibly displaced persons and the spread of nationalist, populist and anti-foreigner narratives, commended the Office's work amid such challenging circumstances and supported its efforts to establish partnerships and promote innovative solutions. She thanked the Office for citing her country's efforts to enhance its national registration system to recognize asylum-seekers with a high presumption of eligibility, noting that that policy was of particular benefit to refugees arriving from countries where LGBTIQ+ minorities were persecuted for their sexual orientation or where female genital mutilation and cutting was still a practice. Her country had developed Sisconare, a digital system that had improved its registration capacity, case management and communication with asylum-seekers, and had increased the transparency and speed of refugee determination. Her country was currently working on translating the system into English, French and Spanish to make it more accessible and had pledged to make the necessary changes to the system to better support family reunification.

4. The representative of the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** said that, as part of continued efforts to promote refugee inclusion, his country had co-led efforts on a multi-stakeholder pledge on education and had pledged £4 million in support of refugee inclusion in national education systems through the Inclusion Support Programme for Refugee Education (INSPIRE). He encouraged UNHCR to prioritize capacity in countries involved in INSPIRE. He acknowledged the significant potential of complementary pathways to offer additional protection channels and opportunities for displaced persons and his country would continue to offer international protection to those who needed it. However, he did not recognize the Office's suggestion that the agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Rwanda was incompatible with his country's international obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. He welcomed the progress identified in the 2022 independent review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2016, but deemed the ambition of the Policy to not have been met. UNHCR should continue to support that vital work, where protection-centred humanitarian action served as the gold standard. Preventing and responding to gender-based violence, including in conflict, crises and humanitarian settings, was a top priority for his country, as reflected in its pledge during the Global Refugee Forum of £2 million to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. UNHCR must increase its ambition in combating gender-based violence, including by allocating part of the

core budget to the gender-based violence information management system; influencing humanitarian protection system reform to ensure that gender-based violence was retained as an area of responsibility; collect disaggregated equalities data on its own work, in particular on refugees with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ refugees; and mainstreaming equalities, such as by working with women-led organizations.

5. The representative of **South Africa** expressed concern about the increased number of displaced persons, the greatest burden and responsibility for which fell on low- and middle-income countries. While short-term life-saving support was important, it was not sufficient or sustainable; long-term solutions, including strengthening engagement by countries of origin in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, was the answer. Governments should, with the assistance of the international community, address the root causes of displacement in countries of origin by resolving armed conflicts, strengthening institutions, building peace, protecting human rights and achieving sustainable development. Sustained peace would increase voluntary repatriation and the meaningful reintegration of returnees who could contribute to building back their communities.

6. In reference to the statement in the Note on international protection that South Africa had proposed to withdraw from the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and reaccede with reservations, he wished to stress that South Africa was not abrogating its international obligations. On the contrary: such action would allow his country to conduct a long-overdue rationalization of its national legislation on citizenship, immigration and refugee protection that would, in fact, strengthen its ability to comply with its obligations under international law. Once that rationalization was complete, the process for reaccession to the Convention would be initiated. He asked the Office to accurately reflect in its future reports to the Executive Committee the overarching intent of his Government in relation to that matter.

7. His country would continue to provide international protection to deserving refugees and asylum-seekers, including by strengthening measures to build coherence between refugees and host communities. In that regard, he urged UNHCR to include host-community-led organizations in discussions on the implementation of durable solutions, particularly in relation to local integration. Having taken note of the Office's explanation of the "whole-of-route" approach to mixed movement and mitigating the misuse by economic migrants of refugee law, he wished to propose that UNHCR should consider holding sessions with Member States to ensure that that approach was understood given the different commitments that Member States might have in relation to refugee law. Such sessions would empower Member States to understand the roles of UNHCR and Governments in relation to implementation and how the burden and responsibility of hosting refugees on low- and middle-income countries could be alleviated. It would also be helpful if UNHCR would give a formal briefing on complementary pathways that would not compromise opportunities for migrants, as mentioned in the Executive Committee's draft conclusion.

8. The representative of **Italy** said that, as the number of forcibly displaced persons globally hit record numbers, she wished to reiterate her country's support for seeking political solutions while ensuring compliance with international law. The Group of Seven Summit, which had been under the Italian presidency, had affirmed in its final communiqué the Group's collective commitment to fostering comprehensive, mutually beneficial and durable partnerships on refugee- and migration-related issues, especially with African countries along migratory routes. That commitment was in line with her country's strong engagement on such issues. Recognizing durable solutions and complementary pathways as realistic alternatives that had the potential to curb irregular migration and the use of smuggling and trafficking networks, she welcomed the Executive Committee's draft conclusion and expressed confidence that the final document would fully address current realities, challenges and opportunities for refugees. Promoting and expanding access to employment supported refugees in re-establishing independent and productive lives with an adequate standard of living, and required collaborate approaches among States, civil society, the private sector and development actors. Her Government was fully committed to such approaches, as demonstrated by its "Welcome" programme in partnership with the private sector, some 12,000 beneficiaries of which had been integrated into the Italian labour market in 2023. She commended UNHCR for its collaborative work with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on a "whole-of-route" rights-based approach to mixed movement, work from which Italy would certainly benefit.

9. The representative of **Ukraine** expressed her country's pride in having been elected as a new member of the Executive Committee and its eagerness to contribute to efforts to strengthen the vital

work of UNHCR. She also expressed her country's gratitude to UNHCR for the life-saving assistance and support provided to displaced Ukrainians and reiterated her country's strong commitment to its long-standing partnership with UNHCR. As the Russian Federation's armed aggression against Ukraine continued unabated, the displacement crisis it had caused was becoming protracted: more than 4 million Ukrainians remained internally displaced and a further 6.5 million had sought safety abroad. The continued hospitality and solidarity shown toward Ukrainians by European Union Member States, who had prolonged the temporary protection measure for 4.2 million Ukrainians until March 2026, and other hosting countries was greatly appreciated. She called on UNHCR to ensure the full and effective implementation of the regional response plan for the Ukraine situation, and called on the donor community to provide the funding necessary to achieve the plan's strategic objectives. In that connection, she encouraged UNHCR and all partners to continue their active engagement in the Government-led response in Ukraine, focusing on programmes and policies that supported resilience, recovery and durable solutions.

10. Noting that the term "war in Ukraine" had been used in the Note on international protection, she called on UNHCR to bring its use of language into line with that used in numerous United Nations General Assembly resolutions, which refers to "aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine". Ukrainian civilians who found themselves in the hands of the Russian Federation were protected persons under international humanitarian law. Ukraine was committed to pursuing diplomatic efforts towards ending the aggression and achieving a just and lasting peace. She urged all peace-loving nations to join the Member States and international organizations that had already supported the Joint Communiqué on a Peace Framework, the final statement of the Summit on Peace in Ukraine that had taken place in June 2024, and encouraged all countries to support the implementation of the Communiqué's provision of ensuring global food security and the return of all deported and unlawfully displaced Ukrainian civilians, in particular children.

11. The representative of the **Republic of Korea** said that he wished to emphasize the principle of non-refoulement and the right to seek asylum as two fundamental pillars of refugee protection. Faced with the challenge of growing refugee populations, UNHCR must seek narratives of possibility and more integrated and comprehensive solutions. The new "whole-of-route" approach was the outcome of the Office's strategic thinking. The approach would enhance protection of refugees while fostering a shift away from the current projected trend of refugee crises, and represented a change in the Office's usual approach of continually providing short-term assistance. However, he wished to caution that, although the approach related to mixed movement, its objectives on refugee and migration issues should not be confused; responses and solutions for refugees should be improved without inadvertently stimulating irregular movements. In addition, it was important not to forget the importance of routes back to countries of origin; work on those routes under the approach should not be neglected. His Government would continue its efforts to meet the protection and other needs of refugees while strengthening its partnership with UNHCR.

12. The representative of **Chile** said that her country, with the support of UNHCR, was currently leading the Cartagena+40 Process. Three regional consultations had been held in 2024. The first was held in April with the support of Mexico and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and had focused on the protection and assistance of persons in situations of human mobility and statelessness. Matters discussed included an integrated strategy for protection in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, the elimination of statelessness through determination procedures and removing legal hurdles to acquiring nationality, the digitalization and decentralization of the asylum process, the protection of women who had been victims of violence, synergy between regional mechanisms and the establishment of a network for the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. The second was held in May in Brazil with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank and was focused on inclusion and integration through sustainable solutions. Discussions centred on economic inclusion for social cohesion and its connection with the triple nexus, regularization and documentation allowing access to public services, regional cooperation on facilitating the recognition of degrees and professional qualifications, and support for strategic alliances with the private sector and development actors.

13. The third regional consultation was held in June with the support of Colombia and was focused on protection against forced displacement caused by disasters in recognition of the growing impact of the effects of climate change on internal and cross-border movements. Many different actors, including representatives of local government, regional and international bodies, civil society organizations, academia, the private sector and donor countries, participated in the discussions. In

addition, negotiations on the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action had taken place in Geneva and would be adopted in Chile in December 2024. The Plan of Action included a monitoring phase that would allow for more substantive follow-up and the aim of the Plan was to regionalize good practices on comprehensive protection and solutions based on shared opportunities, all with an intersectional and intercultural gender perspective. As support and assistance from donor countries would be welcome, she invited Member States to join the multi-stakeholder pledge on the Cartagena+40 Process which was made during the Global Refugee Forum in 2023.

14. The representative of the **Kingdom of the Netherlands** said that his country continued to support the Office's efforts to strengthen inclusion in civil registration and justice systems to further improve access to economic opportunities. While sharing the Office's concerns regarding returns that did not meet protection standards, he welcomed the Office's efforts to support voluntary repatriation. It was a key durable solution that was becoming less attainable for many refugees owing to protracted conflicts and other challenges in countries of origin. In particular, he expressed appreciation for the Office's work to improve conditions for sustainable repatriation to Afghanistan. The international community must contribute to improving conditions in countries of origin to allow refugees to make a sustainable and dignified return.

15. The representative of **Pakistan** said that her country had been a host country for more than four decades. Currently, 1.4 million Afghans determined by UNHCR as refugees were registered in Pakistan and another 800,000 Afghan migrants carried Afghan citizenship cards issued under a project facilitating their access to flexible visa regimes. Waning international assistance for Afghan refugees and host communities in Pakistan added another layer of complexity to a situation already complicated by the dual stressors of illegal cross-border migratory inflows and climate-induced displacement. Despite those challenges, her Government continued to support programmes providing targeted assistance to refugees and migrants in sectors such as health, education, water, sanitation and agriculture, had launched a number of different vocational and skills development programmes for Afghan men, women and girls and annually granted fully funded scholarships to Afghan refugees for pursuing higher education. In December 2023, Pakistan had released another 4,500 scholarships, nearly half of which were reserved for women. While appreciative of pledges and commitments made during the Global Refugee Forum, follow-up was necessary. Countries that promised resettlement to Afghans must deliver. In addition, more engagement was needed through the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees support platform. Now that the conflict in Afghanistan had ended, she called on the international community to support conditions for the return and reintegration of refugees through political and financial solidarity.

16. The representative of **Kenya** said that political solutions, while key to resolving many violent conflicts, must be backed up by strong investment in development, good governance and strong institutions. Failure to do so would leave countries vulnerable to relapse. She asked UNHCR to stress the importance of that approach when addressing conflict and violence. She also asked UNHCR to provide further information about its Digital Transformation Strategy and also about its data sharing agreement with the World Bank, including how the agreement related to the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement. More information on actions being taken in refugee-hosting areas affected by climate change and environmental degradation would be welcome, as would more details on the UNHCR Climate Resilience Fund, including its areas and countries of focus. Disturbed by the vulnerabilities and plight of children in displacement contexts, she wished to know more about the Office's efforts to help such children, including measures to ensure accountability for offences committed against them, such as trafficking. Concerned about low levels of enrolment in schools and universities, she emphasized the importance of supporting host countries' efforts to include refugees in their education systems. As voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity remained the preferred solution in the majority of refugee situations, it was regrettable that recent decades had seen a reduction in the number of refugees benefiting from facilitated repatriation. She called for enhanced support for peace efforts to address violent conflict, which remained the leading driver of forced displacement.

17. The representative of the **United States of America** welcomed the Office's initiatives to make asylum processes fairer, more efficient and more accessible, such as the Asylum Capacity Support Group and the expansion of digital tools for registration and documentation. The United States of America was pleased to support capacity-building initiatives to help States to uphold their international obligations and improve their asylum infrastructure. She welcomed the Office's work to develop partnerships, including with the World Bank and private sector entities, to foster

sustainable solutions and advance protection. She also welcomed the Office's efforts to address mixed movements. The development and implementation of lawful pathways was vital to reduce reliance on dangerous and irregular migration routes. The United States of America facilitated such pathways, having adopted the Safe Mobility Initiative and encouraged other countries to take similar measures. The United States Refugee Admission Program was a critical pillar of her country's refugee protection and a source of pride for her country, as it welcomed refugees from every region of the world and was projected in the 2024 fiscal year to welcome the highest number of refugees in thirty years. Her country remained deeply committed to addressing the challenges of forced displacement and was dedicated to working with UNHCR and the international community to do so.

18. The representative of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, welcoming the Office's call on Member States to meet their commitments under the Global Compact on Refugees in response to the growing needs of refugees, encouraged the Office to call on Member States to, in addition, fulfil their responsibilities to protect refugees and guarantee their access to fundamental rights, including the rights to education, health and work. The situation in his country remained a source of concern owing to serious humanitarian crises arising from conflict and violence, including the M23 armed troops in Rwanda, as a result of which the number of displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had risen to over 7.2 million. Between April and June 2024, the refugee population in his country had dropped by 0.5 per cent to just over 500,000 owing to the repatriation of refugees to the Central African Republic. During the same period, the number of asylum-seekers had increased from 5,000 to 6,500. His Government remained determined to hold tripartite discussions with Rwanda and UNHCR regarding the repatriation of refugees to their respective countries of origin and expressed the hope that UNHCR would prioritize that effort. His Government had expanded its commitments to include fostering conditions for the return of Congolese refugees to his country and promoting the inclusion of foreign refugees in the country's national systems. Those commitments demonstrated his country's determination to find solutions to difficult issues. He encouraged UNHCR to seek complementary pathways, such as settlement in a third country, family reunification and integration.

19. The representative of **France**, aligning her remarks with the statement made by the European Union, commended the work carried out by UNHCR under its protection mandate, in which the risks of persecution of refugees and their potential vulnerabilities relating to their age, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity were taken into account. The Note on international protection contained concerning information about the situation of refugee women and girls, their access to education and the labour market, and the risks of sexual violence and gender-based violence they faced. In order to address those risks, France had chosen to conduct the "Avec elles" (with them) initiative for the protection and integration of refugee women and girls, as part of its co-sponsorship of the Global Refugee Forum 2023.

20. She expressed appreciation for the Office's commitment to internally displaced persons. Internally displaced persons often went on to become refugees, thus lending particular importance to the work of UNHCR in that area. France provided funding for UNHCR assistance to internally displaced persons in the Sudan and Ukraine.

21. France continued to pay particular attention to the issues of mental health and psychosocial support, which were one of the priorities in its humanitarian strategy 2023-2027, and had made pledges in that regard at the Global Refugee Forum 2023.

22. The representative of **Belgium**, aligning her remarks with the statement made by the European Union, expressed support for the work carried out by UNHCR under its protection mandate, particularly in the challenging current context of increasing humanitarian needs and reduced funding. Quality funding, as in multi-year core funding, had been one of the overarching humanitarian priorities of the recent Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Belgium had recently renewed its three-year plan to contribute €10 million a year for the period 2024-2027, totalling €30 million. An additional €3 million would be allocated in 2024, in line with the budgetary decision of the Belgian Government to invest in the reception and protection of refugees and migrants in their regions, paying specific attention to the Sahel region and the Middle East, taking into account respect for human rights as a cross-cutting concern, and in line with the Belgian pledge on flexible funding made at the Global Refugee Forum 2023. Work continued on implementation of a further pledge to allocate an important part of Belgium's humanitarian aid to

refugee situations. She encouraged colleagues to use and promote flexible, predictable and multi-annual funding and expressed support for innovative funding mechanisms, notably blended finance and flexible funding.

23. While recognizing the importance of protection mainstreaming and the centrality of protection, Belgium also promoted initiatives that supported prevention and proactive protection. At the same time, particular attention was paid to the prevention of the impact of harmful information, including misinformation, disinformation and hate speech.

24. Belgium remained committed to the important work on resettlement and complementary pathways. New legislation had been finalized to provide stateless persons unable to return to their home country with the right to reside in Belgium and systems for the identification and protection of stateless migrants were being improved. The international community should step up efforts to encourage the voluntary return of refugees, given the impact that hosting large numbers of refugees had on host countries. UNHCR should consider, in its prioritization of work, how humanitarian aid benefited not only refugees but also host-country populations.

25. It was important for the Office to break down silos, especially in the case of protracted and complex crises, and actively seek durable solutions in partnership with development actors. At the same time, UNHCR should assume its role as a neutral international humanitarian actor, guiding and facilitating returns, ensuring that they were safe, voluntary and dignified. She thanked the Office and its dedicated staff for the crucial work they carried out for asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons and their families.

26. The representative of **Lebanon**, aligning her remarks with the statement made by the Arab Group, expressed appreciation for the Note on international protection, which reflected the complexity of current challenges. In that regard, she paid tribute to the efforts of UNHCR staff at Headquarters and in the field. She expressed concern at the rise in both the numbers of refugees worldwide and the drivers of forced displacement. New crises were unfolding, while protracted ones had no solution in sight, resulting in humanitarian tragedies. Not only should organizations such as UNHCR continue to receive the funding required to address that alarming state of affairs, but the international community should renew its commitment to burden- and responsibility-sharing and approach protracted refugee crises with a paradigm shift prioritizing durable solutions over simple crisis management.

27. Lebanon and its people had borne the brunt of an intractable refugee crisis that threatened its stability and future for 14 years. The international community had focused mainly on the humanitarian aspect of the crisis, neglecting its repercussions on the host communities and the overall situation in the country. The issue had been overly politicized from the outset. Postponing a durable solution to the refugee crisis until a complete political solution had been reached in the Syrian Arab Republic had had adverse effects on Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and displaced persons themselves, and would have negative repercussions elsewhere. While Lebanon's partners had often refused to listen to its warnings, resulting in a fraught situation marked by mistrust, lack of communication and resentment, Lebanon had always kept the channels of communication open.

28. New, less ideological and more pragmatic approaches should be adopted, and the gradual return of displaced persons unequivocally envisaged. She invited UNHCR to listen to her country's concerns, to be supportive of its sovereignty, to be more attuned to the plight of its host communities, and to collaborate more closely in a transparent manner, with a view to reversing the current negative spiral.

29. The gradual, safe and dignified return of refugees to secured regions in the Syrian Arab Republic should be envisaged, with an active role played by international organizations, together with strong commitment from the international community, providing the minimum infrastructure necessary for displaced persons to live a decent life. For that purpose, UNHCR should intensify its efforts, with all concerned players, to remove obstacles to the return of displaced persons and ensure the sustainability of those returns, in the medium and long term, thereby providing an incentive for other displaced persons to return. The safe, dignified return of refugees was, above all, a human right.

30. The representative of **Spain**, aligning his remarks with the statement of the European Union, expressed appreciation for the report, and said he shared the analysis of the many challenges faced in the protection of forcibly displaced persons, who were fleeing for many different reasons, whether they were asylum-seekers, migrants, or the millions of internally displaced persons. Expressing gratitude for the generosity of host countries and communities, and for the ongoing collaboration between UNHCR and IOM, he said that Spain was willing to collaborate in the promotion of the “whole-of-route” approach, which addressed mixed movements of refugees and migrants in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, as shown in various projects in central America and the Sahel region.

31. Spain maintained a balanced and constructive approach, combining inclusive policies with policies to improve the management of asylum and humanitarian applications, with support for host countries and countries of origin and transit. Nearly all the pledges made at the previous Global Refugee Forum 2019 had been met, with some far exceeded. The principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing was more meaningful than ever, and all actors were called upon to play a more active role, accompanied by political will, with concrete measures delivering tangible results. In that regard, it was important to implement the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

32. In addition to improving national protection systems and adapting them to the current global situation, mechanisms for safe, orderly and regular migration should be enabled, and host countries given more support. For that reason, the Spanish presidency of the European Council had prioritized the historic European Pact on Migration and Asylum, which protected the rights of displaced persons in line with the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility.

33. Spain had witnessed first-hand the exponential rise in the number of displaced persons received, which had reached 160,000 in 2023, in response to which it had introduced improved international protection measures, including the strengthening of the Asylum and Refugee Office, with the much appreciated assistance of UNHCR; the launching of the temporary protection mechanism for Ukrainians forced to flee by the Russian invasion; and an overhaul of its immigration regulations.

34. Spain was committed to increasing its official development and humanitarian aid, and had introduced a new law on international cooperation to that end. He reiterated Spain’s support for the work of UNHCR, in a spirit of global solidarity towards refugees.

35. The representative of **Chad**, aligning his remarks with the statement of the African Group, expressed appreciation to UNHCR for the Note on international protection, stressing the crucial need to respect international legal standards and deliver on commitments undertaken under the Global Compact on Refugees. He expressed concern at new major conflicts resulting in the displacement of millions of persons, in particular from the Sudan, which had led to nearly 9 million persons fleeing inside or outside the country. As at 31 May 2024, the conflict in the Sudan had forced more than 1,200,000 refugees and 180,000 Chadian repatriates to flee towards Chad, with more than 115,000 arrivals since the start of 2024. In addition, there were more than 219,000 internally displaced persons in the Chad lake region.

36. Given the ongoing nature of the conflict in the Sudan and the constant arrival of new refugees and returnees, it was estimated that the number of refugees and returnees could reach 2 million by the end of 2024. Currently one-third of the new arrivals lived in very difficult conditions in Chad, in spontaneous camps along the border with the Sudan. The town of Adré, with 40,000 inhabitants, had seen its population increase six-fold with its hosting of refugees, with all the difficulties that entailed.

37. In that context the Government had urgently requested UNHCR and its partners to accelerate the resettlement of new arrivals, particularly those arriving in Adré, away from border zones. Despite the 2024 Global Appeal, the response in eastern Chad was underfinanced, with just 10 per cent of the \$214.8 million requested received so far. To cover immediate needs, \$80 million was urgently needed. He called on the international community, donors and funding mechanisms to help UNHCR provide an effective response to the forcibly displaced in Chad. His Government welcomed its cooperation with UNHCR and reiterated his continued support to the Office and its objectives.

38. National actions taken included the adoption of a law on the protection and the rights of internally displaced persons and refugees; the allocation of a 300,000-hectare area to refugees for a three-year period; the permanent opening of borders between Chad and the Sudan; and the protection of refugees. He encouraged UNHCR, all United Nations agencies and countries involved in the conflict to promote peace in the Sudan – it was the only way to stop the flow of refugees into Chad and other border countries.

39. The representative of **Morocco** welcomed the Note on international protection, expressing concern that in 2023, UNHCR had declared 43 emergency situations, the highest annual total in a decade, highlighting the critical need to uphold international legal standards, establish and strengthen fair and effective asylum systems, respond more effectively to mixed movements, and ensure access to rights and the inclusion of refugees in national systems.

40. Morocco commended the Office for its emphasis on the need to strengthen asylum systems; it was true that fair and effective asylum systems were crucial for States to fully and inclusively implement refugee law, particularly through status determination and the activation of protection. The effective and timely registration of asylum-seekers was a crucial step for establishing identity, granting legal status, documentation, and providing protection. Failure to do so could result in people living in exile for years without legal security. Countries that refused registration, thereby denying populations access to durable solutions or complementary pathways, fostered a situation of humanitarian dependency.

41. Morocco wished to learn more about the resources invested by UNHCR to strengthen digital tools to facilitate registration, and the measures taken to replicate best practices observed by the Office. Given the complexities of mixed and secondary movements, a rights-based approach should be used. Morocco's policies were designed to respect the principle of non-refoulement and facilitate safe, legal pathways for refugees and migrants. The trafficking of migrants and asylum-seekers, the criminalization of migration, and the practice of refoulement – which had become too common in certain regions, particularly in the central Mediterranean – were unacceptable.

42. Combined with a lack of regular pathways, nationalist, populist, anti-refugee, and xenophobic narratives were often one of the main drivers of mixed movements. In that regard, he asked for more information on the Office's new digital protection project to enhance its capacity to counter hate and misinformation on digital platforms.

43. He expressed concern that in many countries, asylum-seekers and refugees, including children, were detained or had their movement restricted. In prolonged humanitarian situations children were sometimes even recruited into armed groups. He urged UNHCR to prevent that practice and continue its work advocating for non-discriminatory inclusion and access to quality child protection systems, birth registration, and basic services.

44. Regarding durable solutions and complementary pathways, he noted that in past decades fewer refugees had benefitted from voluntary repatriation and complementary pathways facilitated by UNHCR. Lack of access to travel documents was a major obstacle for refugees seeking to pursue complementary pathways. Indeed, in his region, host States deliberately hindered the realization of solutions and refugee self-sufficiency, fuelling prolonged situations for political gain and creating humanitarian dependency. Priority should be given to durable solutions.

45. The representative of the **Philippines** thanked UNHCR for the Note on international protection, expressing concern at the current refugee and statelessness situation, for which solutions should be rooted in international humanitarian law, the necessary aid given, and the protection space expanded to those in need. She commended UNHCR on its valiant efforts to provide international protection for refugees and stateless persons in accordance with its mandate, despite the gaps in resources and the increased number of complex crises requiring multi-faceted responses. She expressed appreciation to States hosting large refugee populations despite their own domestic challenges. Her country hosted a relatively small number of refugees, stateless persons and asylum-seekers through its complementary pathways programme, under which they were provided with a safe and regulated avenue of admission and stay through education. Collaboration with private and international partners in expanding that work, which could be replicated in other States, would be welcome.

46. Since the second world war, the Philippines had hosted increasingly larger numbers of refugees. The current delicate global context, marked by armed conflicts and natural hazards, could rapidly lead to the displacement of persons; it was therefore important to work together in a spirit of solidarity to ensure complementary pathways and durable solutions. She valued the close coordination and cooperation between national and local governments, UNHCR and other international organizations, together with civil society organizations and community groups, to achieve the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees and the roadmap for 2030 on resettlement and complementary pathways. The Philippines would continue to work with UNHCR as part of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness Solution Seeker Programme, and encouraged other States to do the same.

47. The representative of **Ghana**, aligning her remarks with the statement of the African Group, expressed appreciation for the Note on international protection and for the unrelenting efforts of UNHCR in delivering a broad range of support to refugees and displaced populations, especially those acutely affected by the disruptions, chaos and uncertainties of rising global tensions, persecutions and climate change. Ghana continued to contribute significantly to refugee management in various ways, including recent investment in the renovation of semi-permanent structures for recently arrived asylum-seekers. Funding was still required, however, and she requested support to enable completion of those structures.

48. The situation in Burkina Faso continued to result in displacement. Ghana had recently received persons fleeing insurgent attacks there, registering them promptly to guarantee their protection, and was dedicated to promoting self-reliance through economic inclusion for refugees by 2025. To that end, the Government had recently provided additional funding for livelihood assistance by acquiring more farming lands in the north of the country to facilitate the employment of asylum-seekers. The provision of further livelihood assistance was required, however, for refugees and asylum-seekers in other parts of the country.

49. All persons seeking refuge in Ghana were guaranteed protection. In addition to facilitating livelihood activities for refugees and asylum-seekers, a programme to issue them with national identification cards was under way to ensure their access to essential services such as health care, education and other social services in the same way as Ghanaian nationals. Ghana was taking part in ongoing discussions to ensure the asylum system provided safe haven for persons entering the country with livestock, mainly driven by climatic conditions.

50. The funding situation of UNHCR and the establishment of the Multi-Country Office had an impact on the response to emergencies, particularly with regard to new arrivals in the south of the country. Ghana remained committed to its obligations, however, despite the funding challenges, and would continue to implement existing humanitarian and relief programming to refugees, asylum-seekers and host communities, either through direct assistance or community-based programmes.

51. Expressing appreciation to all donor countries and private donors for their contributions, particularly unearmarked funding, which provided UNHCR with the flexibility to carry out its activities, she urged donors to increase funding for sustainable refugee protection.

52. The representative of **El Salvador** expressed his appreciation for the Note on international protection and said he shared the concern regarding the increase in the global challenges arising from violence, conflicts, climate crises, discrimination and persecution among others, leading to millions of forcibly displaced persons worldwide.

53. That alarming situation called for concrete actions to be implemented to benefit people requiring comprehensive international protection, in compliance with their human rights. He echoed the appeal made by others for action and international solidarity to respond effectively to the urgent needs of that vulnerable section of the population, provide durable solutions, strengthen co-operation, support host communities, increase financing and humanitarian assistance and address the structural causes of forced displacement.

54. He acknowledged the Office's work to support States in areas including the prevention, reduction and protection of persons who were displaced or at risk of displacement, and the implementation of the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees. El Salvador had made huge efforts to improve its response to refugees, displaced persons and persons at risk of displacement

arriving in its territory, helping to afford them a life of dignity, peace and well-being, in line with the implementation of the Global Compact and international norms. Actions in the area of security implemented by the Government had shown a change in the dynamics of human mobility both in terms of Salvadorans leaving the country, and within the country.

55. As part of its actions through the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (platform known by its Spanish acronym MIRPS), and thanks to the cooperation of UNHCR, El Salvador had made significant progress in protecting all persons on the move, with good results. For example, the CUBO project had provided protection and opportunities for young people and children at risk of displacement, and the “*A tu lado*” (by your side) centres provided information, guidance and specialized services for refugees, stateless persons and those requiring international protection. El Salvador continued to make progress in modernizing its asylum system and had begun work on building a new centre for asylum-seekers arriving in El Salvador. He expressed appreciation for the support received from all relevant stakeholders, including international organizations, civil society, the private sector and the experiences of refugees themselves.

56. The representative of **Cuba** said she took note of the Note on international protection. Today there were more than 117 million forcibly displaced persons – around 6 million of whom were Palestinian refugees registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. She expressed concern at the impossible living conditions faced by the Palestinian people in Gaza as a result of the actions of the occupying power, and at the destruction of critical infrastructure, the displacement of the population and the severe restrictions on access to essential services such as water, food and medical care.

57. Faced with that scenario, efforts should be redoubled to implement the Office’s mandate to provide international protection for the millions of refugees, asylum-seekers and other persons of concern to UNHCR. She stressed the importance of preserving the distinct definitions and categories that entailed specific protection, and of differentiating more clearly between refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, taking into account their specific characteristics. The erroneous classification of economic migrants, including Cuban economic migrants, as asylum-seekers must stop; it was political manipulation, which undermined the integrity of the international protection system. Furthermore, unilateral measures that encouraged irregular mobility – a clear example of which was the economic, commercial and financial blockade that had been imposed on Cuba for almost 60 years – must come to an end. In addition to the devastating effects of that blockade Cuba was now affected by the unjustified inclusion and retention of Cuba on the list of States that allegedly sponsored terrorism.

58. To avoid duplication of resources and to preserve the letter of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, it was crucial not to confuse economic migrants with asylum-seekers, as had been done in the Global Report 2023, in the section concerning the Americas region. Those categories had distinct legal frameworks and entailed different types of care. Cuba called on the international community and UNHCR to continue to promote the strict, faithful implementation of the 1951 Convention, to which Cuba reaffirmed its commitment.

59. The representative of **Honduras** welcomed the Note on international protection and expressed appreciation for the technical assistance provided by UNHCR in updating national legislation on prevention, care and protection for internally displaced persons. That effort was accompanied by concrete actions undertaken by the Honduran Government, such as the establishment of the first centre for irregular migrants in the city of Danlí one year before, which had received around 40,000 people to date, who were given basic medical assistance and informed of their human rights.

60. Under the migratory amnesty, irregular migrants were exempted from paying the administrative penalty of \$240, in line with the principles of the United Nations. It was essential to continue working together to guarantee protection in line with international obligations and the obligations of Honduras under the MIRPS framework and the Global Refugee Forum.

61. In its collaborative work with Guatemala and Mexico on the protection of migrants, Honduras had raised the issue of human trafficking and had worked to establish concrete actions to protect those arriving in its territory.

62. The representative of **Church World Service (CWS)**, speaking on behalf of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), said that her statement was delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs. NGOs welcomed the Office's Strategic Plan for Climate Action, which included principles for protection-sensitive climate action programming. Inclusion of those principles was critical, given that climate change was making humanitarian crises and conflicts worse and creating new risks and threats of forced displacement, with disproportional effects on women and girls, children, people with disabilities and LGBTQI+ persons. As UNHCR implemented the Strategic Plan, it was important to take into account three areas of priority in international protection.

63. The first priority area concerned claims for international protection made in the context of adverse effects of climate change, bearing in mind the growing link between climate change, conflict and displacement. The Office should develop guidelines on international protection for climate-related cases, and provide legal interpretative guidance for governments, legal practitioners, judiciary and UNHCR staff involved in refugee status determination. That did not reduce the need for in-place climate protections or safer climate mobility pathways, or for polluting States to fulfil their commitments to averting and minimizing climate-induced displacement through adaptive funding and contributing to the Loss and Damage mechanism.

64. The second priority area was the access of refugees and internally displaced persons to durable solutions in climate-vulnerable locations. Given the scarcity of durable solutions, third-country solutions included simplifying the registration of refugees fleeing disasters and promoting mechanisms for additional resettlement quotas. UNHCR was encouraged to include climate vulnerability among resettlement assessment criteria and develop related identification methodologies. The Office and its partners should also leverage their expertise to strengthen planned relocation, both as a durable solution and preventative measure for climate-induced displacement.

65. The third priority area was the inclusion of refugees and internally displaced persons in climate adaptation and resilience planning; as States developed national adaptation plans, they should ensure the participation of those categories and other forcibly displaced populations, analysing vulnerabilities from an age, gender and diversity lens. Excluding forcibly displaced persons from decision-making processes threatened to make those plans ineffective. NGOs welcomed the Office's new climate resilience fund and looked forward to discussing how they could best partner with stakeholders to advance those three priority areas.

66. The **Assistant High Commissioner for Protection (UNHCR)** thanked delegates for their comments and support for the Office's protection activities. It was encouraging that many speakers had endorsed the route-based approach. Alongside IOM, UNHCR would continue to engage both individually and collectively with all actors, particularly those involved in the key routes used by refugees and migrants in Africa, Asia and Europe, as it was already doing for the Americas. The Office would also work with Governments of host countries to further support protection activities and the identification of solutions for long-term refugees. She commended Governments that included refugees in their national services as a matter of course, and those that had started implementing their pledges to do so at the Global Refugee Forum. UNHCR echoed the call for donors to make matching pledges in that regard. The PROSPECTS Partnership funded by the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands was one example of such an approach to development assistance that should be replicated by other donors.

67. Noting that many delegates had highlighted the compelling need for solutions, whether by creating conditions conducive to the voluntary return of refugees or through resettlement and complementary pathways, she lauded Governments that were once again running such programmes and encouraged others to do the same. It was also positive to hear the reaffirmation of support for the Global Compact on Refugees and for pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum. UNHCR was counting on Governments to implement those pledges, particularly in the light of the forthcoming High-Level Officials Meeting in 2025. The fortieth anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees was another milestone, and she commended the Governments working to ensure its continued relevance through the adoption of a new action plan. Lastly, responding to the concerns expressed by the representative of South Africa regarding the implication that his Government was abrogating its international obligations with regard to refugees, she acknowledged the challenges faced by that Government in relation to its asylum system and expressed appreciation for its continued commitment to its obligations. The Office would continue to provide support with identifying practical measures to address those challenges.

68. The **Director of the Division of International Protection (UNHCR)** welcomed the recognition of the importance of fair and efficient asylum systems, and thanked Governments that had taken steps, with the support of UNHCR, to strengthen procedures in the face of high numbers of applications. It was particularly encouraging that 54 pledges on the Asylum Capacity Support Group had been made during the Global Refugee Forum. She also thanked Governments that had provided asylum capacity development support to other Governments. The Office was pleased to note the interest expressed in the new refugee treaty and legislation dashboard and would engage in further dialogue with Governments on how they could use it to help effective implementation of national laws and systems.

69. She agreed that gender-based violence was a key protection concern, and reaffirmed the Office's commitment to gender equality, including through increased cooperation with women-led organizations, as had been put into practice during recent consultations with non-governmental organizations. Expressions of support for the Office's long-standing age, gender and diversity approach were welcome. That approach was fundamental to ensuring that people were at the centre of its work to address the different needs and situations of forcibly displaced and stateless persons worldwide and build on their varying capacities, with the aim of preventing discrimination and leaving no one behind. Many governments had also expressed support for efforts to combat misinformation, disinformation and hate speech; the Office looked forward to further dialogue on the issue.

70. Recalling the intervention of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, she commended the work of African Member States to receive and protect refugees, and find long-term solutions for them. Their actions and inclusive legal frameworks illustrated the importance of providing access to territory and protection, even where countries faced their own challenges such as limited resources, or instability or conflict. She also thanked the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and its Member States for their generosity in hosting millions of refugees, including many in protracted situations. The protection and solutions that they continued to provide were an invaluable contribution to upholding the international protection regime and an inspiring expression of the long-standing Islamic tradition of welcoming refugees. UNHCR would continue to facilitate dialogue with all Member States to increase understanding of the challenges related to international protection and ways in which they could be addressed.

71. Many delegations, including those representing non-governmental organizations, had highlighted the difficulties faced by refugees in the context of climate change, the impacts of which were felt in many countries hosting large numbers of refugees. Support for those host communities must be stepped up, notably to ensure they could continue to afford protection. There was a clear correlation between climate change and displacement, although it should be noted that not everyone crossing an international border in the context of climate change was a refugee. States must work with UNHCR to ensure broad application of existing international protection principles, where relevant.

(b) Update on statelessness (EC/75/SC/CRP.14)

72. The **Director of the Division of International Protection (UNHCR)** said that significant progress had been made in addressing statelessness since the launch of the #IBelong campaign, with 14 States acceding to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and 17 acceding to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Better legal frameworks to prevent statelessness and to protect stateless persons had been introduced in several countries in all regions and more than half a million stateless persons had been granted nationality. Yet despite those efforts, statelessness remained a global problem. Although the granting of nationality represented a definitive, far-reaching solution, progress had been slow. In many contexts, children continued to be born stateless. Around half of countries still lacked a key safeguard to prevent statelessness, namely a law to grant nationality to children born on their territory who would otherwise be stateless. In addition, 24 States did not allow women to pass on their nationality to their children on an equal basis with men, which resulted in statelessness if the child could not acquire a nationality from their father.

73. Ending statelessness was a discrimination, human rights and development issue, the resolution of which called for political will and leadership from Governments. Development partners must also be supported, as they could play a key role in addressing the issue, together with stateless communities and stateless-led organizations. To that end, UNHCR was striving to institutionalize

engagement with people who had experienced statelessness. Stateless-led organizations were notably involved in establishing the Global Alliance to End Statelessness.

74. One success of the #IBelong campaign was the increased visibility of the issue and the renewal of commitments made by States. During the high-level segment on statelessness that took place during the seventieth plenary session of the UNHCR Executive Committee, and the first Global Refugee Forum, both held in 2019, 280 pledges related to statelessness had been submitted by States, 48 per cent of which had been implemented or were in progress. An additional 135 pledges on statelessness had been submitted at the Global Refugee Forum in 2023. However, the current rate of implementation could be improved; political commitment needed to be supported by clear, actionable plans that identified priorities for progress and follow-up.

75. Improving data was another key action under the #IBelong campaign, as understanding the scope and causes of statelessness and the risk factors in each context was critical to motivate action and design appropriate responses. At the end of 2023, UNHCR had reported that 4.4 million people were stateless or of undetermined nationality. However, the real figure was widely recognized to be much higher given the complexities in data collection and the relative invisibility of stateless persons in national statistical processes. The number of countries for which figures relating to statelessness figures were reported had increased to 95 in 2023, while the accuracy of the figures had also improved. Forcible displacement was now covered by statelessness statistics, which gave a more comprehensive picture of the issue. However, over half of countries still failed to report statistics on statelessness, and many reported partial data representing only some geographic areas or population groups. To respond to those challenges, UNHCR, through the Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Persons and Statelessness Statistics, had supported the development of the International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics, which had been endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2023. The Office would work with Governments, particularly national statistical offices, and other partners to implement those recommendations. UNHCR was also undertaking qualitative studies in several countries, which had shed light on the causes and consequences of statelessness and provided profiles of the persons affected. Socioeconomic data on statelessness was important as well; studies thus far had demonstrated that statelessness had a major impact on socioeconomic development.

76. The next steps were to build on progress and lessons learned during the #IBelong campaign. The Global Alliance to End Statelessness was a multi-stakeholder platform that would take a whole-of-society approach to the issue, with the involvement of States, United Nations agencies and other international organizations, civil society organizations, regional networks and stateless-led organizations. The aim was to foster greater collaboration and expedite action. To date, more than 50 States and other entities had either joined or committed to joining the Global Alliance, and more were expected to sign up before its launch at the high-level segment on statelessness during the seventy-fifth plenary session of the UNHCR Executive Committee in October 2024. The high-level segment would be a key moment to reflect on the progress made during the #IBelong campaign and would serve to remobilize the international community to take transformative action to end statelessness. In closing, she called on Member States and other stakeholders to join the Global Alliance to strengthen collective efforts for a world without statelessness, in which everyone could enjoy the right to nationality.

77. The representative of **the Republic of the Congo**, speaking on behalf of the African Group, welcomed the work done to tackle statelessness, notably through the #IBelong campaign. Statelessness represented a persistent issue in Africa, affecting thousands of lives and often going unnoticed. However, Member States in the region were working to prevent and reduce statelessness. The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights were key instruments in that regard, as was the Abidjan Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness by the Economic Community of West African States. Several African Member States had adopted measures relating to nationality laws and birth registration procedures, including to abolish legislation preventing women from passing on their nationality to their children or their foreign spouses. Yet political commitment to making such changes remained weak in some countries, while the lack of robust birth registration systems also complicated the situation.

78. The eradication of statelessness required concerted international efforts to guarantee that all individuals could enjoy their fundamental rights as a citizen recognized by a State. In particular,

UNHCR must support Governments in their efforts to revise nationality laws to ensure compliance with international standards, and to remove all elements that allowed discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or religion. To that end, resources must be mobilized to support the strengthening of national birth registration programmes. Awareness campaigns were also needed to encourage political decision makers to ratify the statelessness conventions. African Member States should strengthen their collaboration with regional and local organizations to coordinate such efforts and share best practices. In that regard, support was required for the establishment of national committees to monitor progress on statelessness and undertake periodic reviews to assess progress and identify areas for improvement. In closing, he expressed support for the establishment of the Global Alliance, noting that joint efforts were needed to uphold the right of every individual to an identity and nationality.

79. The representative of the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** commended UNHCR for its leadership of the #IBelong campaign, the achievements of which formed an excellent foundation for the launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. His Government had pledged to join the Global Alliance and also supported the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights. Enshrining gender parity in nationality laws was not only a significant means of reducing childhood statelessness, but also supported the rights of women and girls, recognizing their equal citizenship and enabling them to realize their full potential. He agreed that civil society networks and organizations led by those affected by statelessness had an important role to play in advancing action to end statelessness and encouraged UNHCR to continue working in close partnership with such organizations.

80. The representative of **Mexico** welcomed the progress made on statelessness through the #IBelong campaign, whose consultative basis had enabled stakeholders, especially governments, to take ownership of the issue. Her Government remained committed to eradicating statelessness, which deprived individuals of the right to nationality and impeded their full enjoyment of human rights more generally. She therefore called on Member States to eliminate all forms of discrimination relating to nationality, particularly that based on gender. National initiatives to address the issue of statelessness included the reform of Article 30 of the Constitution to ensure that children born abroad to Mexican parents were able to acquire Mexican nationality on the same basis as children born in Mexico, thereby preventing the risk of statelessness in the event that the third country would not grant them nationality. She welcomed the Office's aim of promoting concrete action by States to grant nationality to stateless persons and prevent new instances of statelessness, as part of an inclusive approach, with the involvement of affected communities and stateless-led organizations, and by strengthening collaboration at the global, regional and national levels. Her Government would seek to play an active role in the forthcoming high-level segment on the issue.

81. The representative of the **United States of America** thanked UNHCR for its efforts to end statelessness through the #IBelong campaign, which had raised awareness of the global issue and galvanized stakeholders to seek effective and durable solutions. Statelessness was a legal or administrative problem created by States, but they could provide solutions by choosing to take action. She acknowledged the work done by many Member States to end statelessness within their countries but highlighted the importance of other partnerships in that regard, including those with stateless-led organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, academic institutions, and humanitarian and development partners. Collaborative efforts were critical, as individuals without a nationality faced tremendous obstacles in accessing basic services, legal protection and rights.

82. Her Government had prioritized the protection of stateless people in the United States of America and supported efforts to reduce statelessness globally. A key objective was to combat arbitrary or unlawful discrimination in nationality laws, including on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion or gender. In July 2023, United Nations Human Rights Council had adopted by consensus Resolution 53/16 entitled "The right to a nationality: equality in nationality rights in law and in practice", which called for an end to discrimination against members of minorities. In August 2023, her Government had completed its pledge to improve the protection of stateless persons by adopting a definition of statelessness for immigration purposes and clarifying when and how officials could consider a non-citizen stateless for the purpose of assessing immigration benefits. In working towards the goal of increasing access to refugee resettlement programmes, including by reuniting refugee families separated while fleeing from persecution, her Government would continue to make refugee resettlement processing available to individuals of all nationalities, including stateless

individuals. At the Global Refugee Forum, her Government had pledged to join the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and to expand global engagement and advocacy for the improvement of statelessness data and the inclusion of stateless persons in statistics. It looked forward to continued work on collaborative solutions to statelessness.

83. The representative of **Brazil** expressed appreciation for the progress accomplished since the beginning of the #IBelong campaign, commending States that had acceded to the statelessness conventions and those that had promoted changes in legislation to safeguard the right to nationality. A migration law introduced by her own Government in 2017 incorporated provisions for the protection of stateless persons, paving the way for the statelessness determination procedure, in force since 2018, and a simplified procedure for the naturalization of recognized stateless persons in Brazil, who now qualified for Brazilian citizenship after only two years of residence. More recently, an amendment to the Constitution prevented the loss of Brazilian nationality when acquiring a second nationality, which represented a safeguard against statelessness in cases of renunciation of citizenship.

84. She welcomed the Office's efforts to improve data on statelessness, observing that quantifying statelessness was a shared responsibility. As well as being essential for the design of effective policies, reliable data were also crucial for civil society advocates for stateless persons. At the regional level, she highlighted the progress made in the framework of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, notably the incorporation of the issue of statelessness into its objectives on the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration. Her Government was proud to have been an active member of the group of friends of the #IBelong campaign and would join the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, which represented an opportunity to renew efforts on the issue.

85. The representative of the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** expressed regret that statelessness continued to represent a global challenge, despite major efforts to the contrary, notably through the #IBelong campaign. The absence of stateless persons from national statistics was particularly concerning, as was the limited introduction of measures to ensure that children could not be born stateless, or to address discriminatory nationality laws. She therefore called on all States to guarantee nationality rights on the basis of place of birth or descent from a national, as was the case in her country. That would provide a double guarantee that all children, regardless of their place of birth or parents' nationality, would have access to nationality and prevent statelessness at birth. It would further protect fundamental human rights and promote social inclusion. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, nationality was also a right that could not be renounced; the Government did not recognize the loss of nationality on the basis of a unilateral decision by a person or authority, as part of its commitment to preventing statelessness. In addition, the civil registration system was designed to be efficient and accessible to ensure that no child was denied nationality due to a lack of documentation. It was through such legal and administrative measures that her Government aimed to protect and guarantee the fundamental right to nationality to all its citizens from birth.

86. The representative of **Zambia** acknowledged the severe global impact of statelessness, which could lead to a lack of access to education, health services and basic human rights. Statelessness due to administrative obstacles, gaps in national laws, ignorance and inaction from various stakeholders was a cross-cutting issue of international and local concern. Her Government remained committed to preventing and ending statelessness globally and was exploring various options to that end. It had made significant progress on its pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in 2023, notably working towards the target of integrating 40 per cent of refugees into its national registration system through the issuance of digital identity cards, and the target of issuing residence permits to 50 per cent of eligible former refugees following the harmonization of laws. Work on those pledges would be supported through funding from the World Bank.

87. The national action plan to eradicate statelessness underscored the Government's continued dedication to addressing the issue by engaging with a range of stakeholders as part of a holistic approach. Steady progress had also been made towards accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. In collaboration with UNHCR, her Government was conducting a nationwide survey of forcibly displaced persons, which would be completed by the end of 2024. The survey would provide streamlined, standardized information on demographics, legal status, and social, cultural, economic and civil and political aspects. It would also help identify persons of concern who might be at risk of statelessness.

88. The representative of **Colombia** said that, as a member of the group of friends of the #IBelong campaign, her Government had made a number of pledges at the Global Refugee Forum. It had taken steps to recognize the status of statelessness, identify and regularize applicants and those seeking international protection, and established a working group on the issue. A memorandum of understanding had also been signed with the Venezuelan Government on protection, safe return and identification to facilitate bilateral cooperation on the issuance of identity documents for children.

89. The representative of **Morocco** said that his Government remained committed to addressing the plight of stateless persons and supported the vision outlined in the strategic plan 2023-2026. He supported the renewed effort to eradicate statelessness and emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement. His country had taken significant strides to ensure its laws and policies aligned with international standards, including through reform of its nationality laws to ensure that no child was born stateless. Reliable data was important, so Morocco supported the establishment of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. A whole-of-society approach was essential for meaningful progress.

90. The representative of the **Women's Refugee Commission** (NGO group statement) said that stateless communities and those impacted by discriminatory nationality laws were suffering increasing human rights abuses worldwide, most urgently in Myanmar and Gaza. As the #IBelong Campaign drew to a close, there were other opportunities to promote the right to a nationality, including through the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. It was crucial for UNHCR and its donors to fully resource the Global Alliance and other States were encouraged to join. Her group supported the continued leadership of the Group of Friends of the #IBelong Campaign, while noting that leadership by those with lived experience and accountability was also essential. In that regard, they welcomed the recent launch of the Global Movement Against Statelessness.

91. In Africa, five countries still prevented women transmitting nationality to their children. Her group therefore welcomed recent legislative reforms addressing gender inequality in Liberia, Madagascar and Sierra Leone, as well as the African Union's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights relating to specific aspects of the right to a nationality and the eradication of statelessness in Africa.

92. Deprivation of nationality was also a significant cause of statelessness in the Americas, notably in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, and childhood statelessness was a particular risk for Venezuelans. In that regard, she welcomed the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights resolution on nationality rights and the Cartagena+40 consultations. There needed to be greater concerted action to protect nationality rights and the rights of stateless people in the region.

93. In Asia and the Pacific, discrimination was a major catalyst for statelessness, with the Rohingya community the most extreme example. States must act in line with their international obligations. Reports of forced evictions and demolitions of homes in the Sama Dilaut community in Malaysia were deeply concerning. She urged the Governments of Brunei, Kiribati, Malaysia and Nepal to reform nationality laws to eradicate gender discrimination. Although legislative gaps remained in most countries, the Philippines had made significant reforms to address statelessness. Progress had also been made in Central Asia.

94. In Europe, statelessness was caused by deliberate policies of nationality deprivation, with the largest stateless communities indigenous to the continent. The absence of dedicated procedures on statelessness was a concern. Children born to migrant or refugee parents risked statelessness as a result of discriminatory laws and insufficient safeguards. European States should ensure nationality to all stateless children born on their territory, and implement the new provisions on identifying stateless persons in the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

95. In the Middle East and North Africa, discriminatory laws and practices further entrenched statelessness in groups such as the Kurds and Bidoon, who endured significant human rights challenges. Nationality deprivation was also used to exclude political opponents and human rights activists. Twelve countries in the region still discriminated against women in nationality laws.

96. The **Director of the Division of International Protection** (UNHCR) said that the Office was grateful for all the support for the #IBelong Campaign and acknowledged the work of the Group of Friends, led by the United States of America. She thanked delegates for their support for the work

of UNHCR to address statelessness and those who had shared the work their countries were doing, while recognizing that more still needed to be done. Statelessness was indeed often rooted in discrimination, so legal identity for all was the way to ensure that no-one was left behind. While addressing statelessness was primarily the responsibility of States, a whole-of-society approach was important. She looked forward to the engagement that would be provided by the Global Alliance and was encouraged by the interest that had been expressed.

(c) Oral update on the Executive Committee conclusion

97. The **Rapporteur** said that, pursuant to the multi-year workplan adopted the previous year, the topic selected for the Executive Committee conclusion had been international protection, with a focus on durable solutions and complementary pathways. On 16 February 2024, they had held a technical briefing by experts to provide a deeper understanding of the topic. A discussion of the background paper prepared by the Office had then been held on 28 March, during which the Office had recalled that although several of the Executive Committee's previous conclusions had included durable solutions, none had yet addressed complementary pathways. On the basis of those discussions, a zero draft of the conclusion had been drafted and circulated in April. All member States had had an opportunity to put forward language proposals, and those that had broad support had been incorporated into the text.

98. Between April and June, nine meetings had been held to review the zero draft and negotiate the text. The negotiations had been very productive, guided by a humanitarian lens: it was important to remember that everybody was on the same side, even though they had different roles – some as host countries, some as donors and some as both. Although they had not quite managed to achieve consensus on the whole text at the most recent meeting, many participants had agreed that they were very close. In that regard, she noted that making concessions in the interest of finding consensus was not a sign of weakness, but of strength, demonstrating your Government's commitment to serving the interests of the people whose plight they all remained committed to working for. Therefore, as they prepared for the forthcoming meeting on 4 July, she requested colleagues to prioritize respect and to remember that the intention was to support refugees in finding durable solutions and complementary pathways. Noting that several colleagues would be leaving their posts in the coming months, she said that there could be no better parting gift than to reach a final agreement on the conclusion, rather than letting their successors take the credit for their work. Most importantly however, refugees were counting on them.

99. The representative of **the Republic of the Congo, speaking on behalf of the African group**, thanked the Rapporteur for her leadership and agreed that they had made great progress and were close to finalizing the conclusion. As there were more than 50 million displaced persons in Africa, his group took the conclusion on durable solutions and access to complementary pathways very seriously. He encouraged all other delegations to pursue constructive engagement in order to finalize the document.

100. The representative of **Denmark** thanked the Rapporteur for her leadership and for entering into the process in a joyful spirit. She looked forward to engaging in the forthcoming session, which she trusted would enable them to reach agreement on the text.

101. The representative of **Australia** also thanked the Rapporteur for her leadership and for approaching the difficult task with joy. Most of the text had been concluded, which added value, particularly on complementary pathways. She looked forward to working constructively to finalize the text.

102. The representative of **Finn Church Aid** (NGO group statement) said that the Executive Committee conclusion was an opportunity to sustain the momentum of the strong commitments made to support durable solutions at the Global Refugee Forum. With regard to voluntary repatriation, it was important to stress that it must be voluntary. Affirming it as "the preferred solution" could undercut political will for other solutions. Local integration was hampered by a lack of national political will, insufficient international funding, complexities in measuring refugee integration and a lack of guidance. Those challenges should be tackled in the conclusion. With regard to resettlement, States should maintain and expand existing resettlement programmes, and establish new ones. Her group commended those States that ensured their resettlement programmes were truly protection-focused and aligned with UNHCR resettlement priorities, and requested all States to eliminate restrictive selection criteria. Family reunification should be recognized as a right for all.

States should implement policy changes and flexibilities to support effective access to family reunification, especially for unaccompanied children.

103. Complementary pathways were a progressive approach that should be additional to resettlement, responsive to international protection needs and support access to rights and services. The first thing important to the success of complementary pathways was greater investment in host country contexts, which could unlock opportunities. Self-reliance programmes allowed refugees to contribute to their host communities and pursue complementary pathways. Development actors and the private sector should be involved in developing such activities, together with local actors. Host community members could also benefit. A second important aspect was education, which reduced barriers and empowered refugees but also contributed to the socioeconomic development of host communities. States and donors should fund the education of refugee children and young people in first asylum countries, including temporary solutions. Thirdly, by engaging with governments and private companies on labour mobility, a business case for global market demand could be built. Companies could offer financial assistance to refugees to cover relocation and settlement expenses. Fourthly, there needed to be flexible and inclusive policies that took account of the diverse linguistic backgrounds of refugees. There should be more accessible language testing options, to ensure that language requirements were not a barrier to reaching a solution.

104. There were also a number of cross-cutting issues for durable solutions and complementary pathways. Age, gender and diversity mainstreaming and equity were essential for ensuring equal opportunities and rights. Data collection that explored intersectionality was also encouraged, to inform inclusive programming tailored to diverse needs. Mental health and psychosocial support should also be a priority, as it was crucial for the well-being and resilience of refugees. Lastly, multi-sector collaboration towards achieving durable solutions aligned resources, ideas and advocacy initiatives, serving the best interests of refugees, and should be promoted.

105. The **Rapporteur**, responding to the comments, said that she was grateful for the support and was pleased to note that the text and already included many of the things highlighted by the NGOs. There was a paragraph on complementary solutions for the first time, as well as one attempting to identify obstacles to achieving durable solutions, and one on inclusion.

106. The **Chief of the Protection Policy and Legal Advice Section** (UNHCR) thanked the rapporteur for her energy, commitment and skilful facilitation of the discussions thus far. She also thanked Member States for their constructive engagement and looked forward to achieving the consensus that she believed was within reach. It was heartening to see the importance being given to durable solutions and complementary pathways, at a time when solutions of all kinds were needed more than ever.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

107. The representative of **Ukraine** said that the remarks made the previous day by the representative of the Russian Federation were a repetitive set of false and misleading narratives. The reference to 5 million Ukrainians allegedly received was particularly outrageous, as it simply referred to the population of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. He urged all delegations not to fall for that shamefully dishonest and cynical trick. Ukrainian citizens who found themselves in the Russian Federation as a result of its armed aggression against Ukraine were protected persons under international humanitarian law, not refugees.

108. The representative stated that to set the record straight once and for all, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, as well as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol were integral parts of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders. Ukraine's sovereignty over that territory had been reconfirmed by numerous General Assembly resolutions since the start of the Russian aggression in 2014. No territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force should be recognized as legal under international law. The Russian Federation must immediately cease its armed aggression and unconditionally withdraw all its forces and military equipment from Ukraine, and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.

109. The representative of the **United States of America**, addressing erroneous statements made by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and

Cuba, said that United States of America sanctions maintained broad authorizations, exemptions and exceptions for the export of food, medicine and medical devices, and did not target humanitarian aid or transactions. Concrete steps had been taken to mitigate any unintended consequences of sanctions, including through advancing Security Council Resolution 2664, which created a humanitarian carve-out in all United Nations sanctions regimes, and which the United States of America had implemented across all domestic sanctions programmes. His Government remained committed to ensuring that its sanctions did not impede humanitarian assistance, while maintaining pressure on malign actors. The United States of America would continue to support global humanitarian efforts.

110. Turning to the erroneous statements made by the representative of the Russian Federation, he strongly condemned the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations. The war had caused catastrophic loss of life and human suffering, with Russian forces killing civilians, including humanitarians, and disrupting global food systems. The United States of America commended the tireless efforts of UNHCR and others to provide protection and aid to affected communities, and urgently called for safe, unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need, with emphasis on the protection of civilians, especially vulnerable groups. Since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian forces had deported hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian civilians to the Russian Federation, including children forcibly separated from their families. Those children belonged with their families inside Ukraine. The United States of America would continue to stand with the Ukrainian people and help them defend themselves.

111. The representative of **Rwanda**, addressing the allegations made by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, said that Rwanda should not be used as a scapegoat for the failure of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to cater for the security of its own population. The ongoing insecurity in the eastern part of the country stemmed from the lack of political will to address the root causes of the conflict and the ongoing collaboration between the Government and the coalition of illegal armed groups, many of which could trace their roots to those who fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. The situation remained a particular concern to Rwanda, as it continued to experience the pressure of the more than 130,000 people who had found refuge there. A resolution to the conflict should be sought through dialogue rather than by apportioning blame. The Government of Rwanda was committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, under the auspices of the existing regional peace processes, in spite of the bellicose rhetoric from the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including threats of regime change in Kigali. Rwanda's commitment to its own security and the safety of its people remained steadfast.

112. The representative of the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** said that as the Russian Federation continued to attempt to use disinformation to undermine Ukrainian sovereignty, create false pretexts and obfuscate responsibility for its actions in Ukraine, the truth must be safeguarded. Equating the Russian Federation's illegal actions towards those in need of protection with good-faith efforts was offensive. If the Russian Federation really cared about Ukrainian citizens, it would end its illegal war and withdraw its forces from the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

113. The representative of **Hungary, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States**, regretted that the representative of the Russian Federation had again used a humanitarian platform to present a politicized agenda. He expressed full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders.

114. The representative of the **Russian Federation** said that politicized statements making unfounded attacks against the Russian Federation did not contribute to the Standing Committee's constructive discussion of humanitarian issues. The Russian Federation's goal was to save the population of the Donetsk People's Republic, the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions from destruction, and its actions were a response to the aggression of the Ukrainian authorities against Donbass and their unwillingness to stop discrimination against Russian-speaking citizens, or to comply with the Minsk agreements. Russian regions had become the largest recipients of internally displaced people from the Donetsk People's Republic, and the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions of Ukraine. Since February 2022, more than 5 million people had fled to safety in the Russian Federation. The effectiveness of the Russian Federation's efforts to accommodate the arrivals could be verified by visiting the temporary accommodation centres. He strongly rejected the allegations of forced displacement of Ukrainian citizens and children. The Republic of Crimea was a legitimate

subject of the Russian Federation, according to international law. Referendums had been held in the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, and Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, in full compliance with the norms and principles of international law, and their inhabitants had exercised their legitimate right to self-determination and chosen to become citizens of the Russian Federation. Therefore, statements referring to the occupation of those regions did not correspond to reality. Attempts to hold the country responsible for the economic and food situation were nothing more than disinformation.

115. The representative of **Cuba** (observer) said that it was inconceivable to question the proven, devastating consequences of the application of the blockade after 60 years. Two things needed to be clarified. First, that the sanctions were entirely unilateral, had no foundation in international law, and had been universally condemned. Second, that medicines, food and other basic supplies from the United States of America were prohibited from entering Cuba just like other goods. There was no exception. There was an executive prerogative to grant general or specific licenses, although to date none had been granted. If the Government of the United States of America really wanted to reduce the harm it caused the people of Cuba, it would sign such a licence, but it did not, due to a lack of political will. Even attempts to import medical oxygen during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic had failed, due to the lack of a specific license that required the approval of at least five United States of America federal agencies.

116. The representative of the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**, responding to the comments made by the representative of the United States of America, said that unilateral coercive measures constituted a form of economic aggression against developing countries and violated international law. They were clearly intended to have negative effects, particularly on the health, education and food supply systems, affecting all sectors of Venezuelan society, with the objective of causing chaos and bringing about political change. Indeed, the indiscriminate negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures had been repeatedly verified on the ground by United Nations mechanisms, including by the Special Rapporteur on unilateral coercive measures. The mechanisms of such measures were unable to distinguish between different categories of people or services, and had affected Venezuelans both in and outside the country. The Special Rapporteur had also verified that the effects were common to all developing countries that had been subjected to illegal unilateral coercive measures. For that reason, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and other developing States had repeatedly called for the eradication of unilateral coercive measures. If there was any real concern for the situation of the Venezuelan people, such measures should be lifted and eradicated definitively.

The meeting adjourned at 1.15 p.m.
